

## Business profile ...

# Faulkenbery's Bridal

We asked Meridian business owners to fill out questionnaires about themselves and their work. Some questions were serious, some were just for fun.

Kay Faulkenbery is the owner of Faulkenbery's Bridal, on the square in Philadelphia.

She and her husband, Dwight, live in Philadelphia and Tupelo and attend Koinonia Baptist Church, where Dwight is the pastor. Kay has two children, 36-year-old Wendy and 33-year-old Sam.

Kay is a member of Proverbs 31 Women's Ministry and Pathway Ministry.

By Kay Faulkenbery  
special to The Star

### First, the fun

A movie about my life would be called "Runaway Bride" because no matter how many weddings she prepared for ... I could have dressed her beautifully for each one!

### My business

- We sell bridal wear, formal wear, per-

sonalized gifts for the entire wedding party and a complete line of bridal accessories.

- How it started? My husband of 29 years, a Mooreville minister, tragically died of lymphoma five weeks after he was diagnosed. I never expected to marry again but, six years later, I was teaching a women's Bible conference and met my future husband, Dwight Faulkenbery, who was also a minister. We've been married for four years.

Dwight owned a home in Philadelphia and I owned a home and a bridal shop in Tupelo. We both kept our houses and that's when I opened another shop in Philadelphia.

- No. of employees: Four (10 full-time in Tupelo)

### What I think

- The best piece of professional advice I ever received was from my dad, who said, "Reinvest your profits back into your business and do your best not to borrow money."

- What I look for in employees is individuals who are energetic, love people and are easily motivated. The employee who's been with me the longest is Andrea

## I CAN'T IMAGINE

- ▶ A day without water.
- ▶ A week without reading my Bible and having a quiet time with my Lord.
- ▶ A year without seeing my family.

Mitchell, my stepdaughter, our store manager. She's worked for me for four years.

- The best thing that happened at my business this year was good growth and excellent employees — and it's becoming more profitable.

- The biggest challenge my business faces in the coming year is maintaining steady sales during the slower, late summer months.

### A letter from home

- Has Sept. 11 and the U.S. War on Terror changed this country? Yes, people are more cautious about spending money.

- Has it touched my family's life? We're very appreciative of our troops and the price they are paying for us to have a business.

- Do I have employees in the Guard or Reserve? Sara Waltman, one of our employees, has a fiancé serving in Iraq.

- My message for the troops: "We're praying for your safety and we're grateful for all they do."



SUBMITTED PHOTO

## BRAGGING ON ROBBIE

Sgt. James R. "Robbie" Vickers of Chunky, a member of the Mississippi Army National Guard's 150th Combat Engineer Battalion, holds his grandson, Clay. Here is what his wife, Dena, wrote about him: "Robbie has served in the 150th for more than 24 years. This is his first call to active duty. He is proud to serve his country in Iraq, to help promote freedom for these people who have lived under horrible conditions for so long. His primary driving force for serving his country is his family — assuring that his grandson, Clay, will be able to grow up without the fear of terrorism here, in his own country. Also, for the second grandchild we are expecting. Robbie is my husband and that's why I am writing with all the pride that a wife could possibly have for her husband. We will celebrate our eighth anniversary soon and he has been the 'wind beneath my wings' every day since I've known him."



## LOVE FROM HOME

Holly Dennis, a student at Highland Baptist Church Child Development Center, drew this picture. Holly, 5, is the daughter of Steve and Dee Dennis. The children at the center were asked to create a message to the troops through their artwork.

ILLUSTRATION BY HOLLY DENNIS

# Philadelphia

From page 1

— the 298th Composite Battalion, the 298th Service Battalion and the 298th Maintenance Battalion.

On Sept. 1, 1994, the unit became the 298th Corps Support Battalion. Its current designation and responsibilities include providing support in transportation, ammunition, supply and service and maintenance.

In December 2003, the battalion was activated to support Operation Iraqi Freedom and

was deployed to Iraq in February 2004 — supporting many units, including the 1st Infantry Division and elements of the U.S. Marine Corps. The unit returned to Philadelphia in January.

Also stationed in Philadelphia is Detachment 1 of the 367th Maintenance Company of the Mississippi Army National Guard. The mission of the 367th while deployed in Iraq was to support the new Stryker Brigade.

The Stryker is a wheeled, armored vehicle, resembling a tank. It is named in honor of two

Medal of Honor recipients: Pfc. Stuart S. Stryker, who served in World War II, and Spc. Robert F. Stryker, who served in Vietnam.

The 367th provided maintenance and repair parts for the Stryker vehicles. The Stryker Brigade is the first of its kind deployed in combat and the 367th was selected to provide maintenance for the team.

The unit was originally authorized in DeKalb in February 1956 and was organized as Tank Company, Second Battalion, 108th Armored Cavalry Regiment.

The unit later was designated

Company D, First Medium Tank Battalion, 198th Armor on May 1, 1959 and was redesignated in 1963 as Company A, 1st Battalion, 198th Armor, 31st Infantry Division.

A reorganization in November 1965 designated the unit as the 786th Transportation Company, 150th Transportation Battalion.

On Feb. 15, 1968, the unit was reorganized as a platoon of the 367th Heavy Equipment Maintenance Company and was given its present designation on Feb. 1, 1972.

# Angel

From page 1

officer for the name of the slain soldier, to which the officer replied, "I'm sorry, I don't have that information."

He told us that an angel is always the last passenger to board an aircraft and the first one to exit. The officer also asked us to stand at attention when the honor detail brought the casket onboard.

As a white panel truck slowly backed to the aircraft's ramp, the flight crew and other ground personnel assembled themselves in a line formation on the tarmac. A few moments later, I could hear the truck's rear sliding door moving up the metal rollers to reveal a flag-draped aluminum casket.

One of the officers called the group to attention, and the casket was carefully removed from the

truck. On the officer's call, we all stood stoically erect. I can't imagine a single person so much as twitching an eye. Even the contractor stood awkwardly stiff as he straddled his baggage between his legs on the floor.

After saluting our deceased comrade, the line of officers dispersed, and the honor detail strapped the casket to the deck of the aircraft. I took my seat again — this time with a blue field of white stars resting directly before me at my feet.

The rear ramp of the aircraft slowly elevated and locked into place, and the crew chief extinguished all white lights within the cabin. After momentary darkness, several dim night-vision bulbs illuminated and bathed the gray walls of the interior in green incandescence.

The aura of these subtle lights transformed our sterile gray cabin into a sacred, holy

chamber, and it left me reverently silent in the moment.

## Lost in thought

A few minutes later, as I departed my camp's airfield in Iraq for the last time, I did not notice the airplane lifting from the ground. I was completely lost in the stolen dreams prematurely taken from my nameless comrade.

Over an hour later, when the aircraft landed in Kuwait, the rear hatch opened again and a slight breeze caught the large American flag hanging from the ceiling above my fallen brother, thus bringing my attention back to earth.

Within the next few weeks, as members of Operation Iraqi Freedom II return home, and to our "normal" routines in society, my hope is that the work of these many valiant soldiers and

Marines will be successfully realized.

Virtually everyone I've met who participated in this endeavor has earnestly tried to assist in building Iraq's fledgling democracy and help create a model of freedom for this region of the world. We all have faith that our efforts are not in vain.

Days after arriving in Kuwait, I still couldn't shake the experience of my last flight from Iraq. I'm often reminded of Mississippi's heroes who have already taken this final ride home.

Finally, as I thumbed through the pages of *Stars and Stripes* one morning, I was able to find the name of my fallen comrade. Sgt. 1st Class Todd Gibbs, 37, of Lufkin, Texas, rest assured that in my mind, your name will always reside alongside Mississippi's own fallen angels.

Your devotion and sacrifice will not be forgotten.

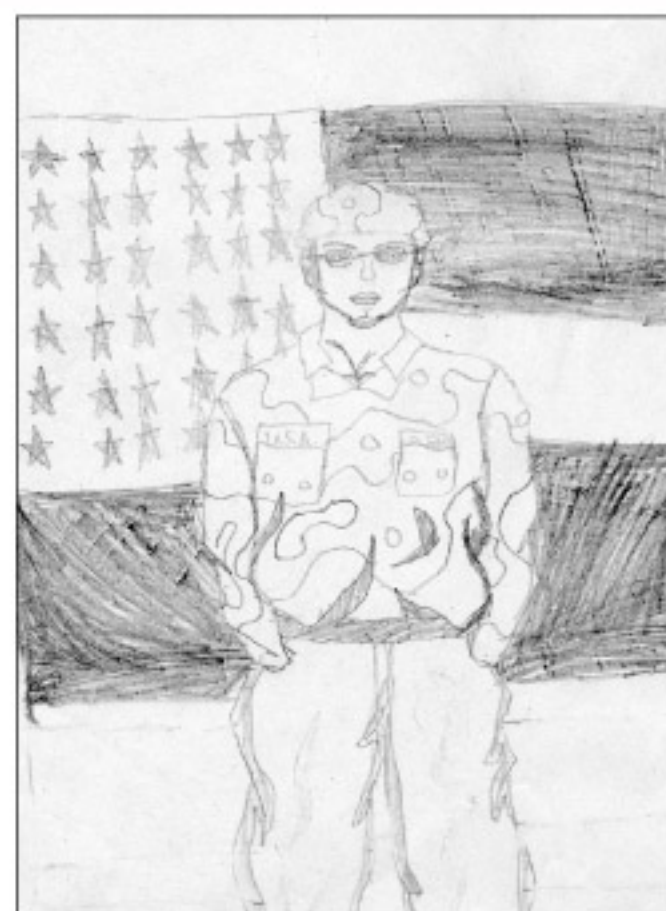


ILLUSTRATION BY JARED RUSSELL

## 91ST ENGINEER BATTALION

Jared Russell is a fifth-grade student at Newton County Elementary School. His drawing is in honor of his uncle, Spc. Robert Slaughter of the Mississippi Army National Guard's 91st Engineer Battalion, 2nd Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division. Slaughter lives in Meridian with his wife, Cindy, and daughters Inger, Bonnie and Ansley. He graduated from Mississippi State University with a degree in landscape architecture and has been awarded an artistic fellowship at the Savannah College of Art and Design based on his senior project — which was about the historical preservation of downtown Meridian. He deployed to Iraq in January 2004. His tour has been extended twice, but he is expected to return home before the end of this month.



Russell